

## MINUTES OF PASTORAL PARISH COUNCIL A.G.M. Friday 29th MAY 2015

Father John opened the meeting with a Blessing and Prayer.

**Present:** There were 13 parishioners present.

**Apologies:** Apologies were received from 4 people.

**Minutes of last AGM:** The Minutes of the last AGM held on 23rd May 2014 were proposed by Jill Kent and seconded by Tony Lightfoot.

**Matters arising:** These were covered by Agenda items.

### **Parish Priest's report:**

May I begin by thanking you for your support over the first full year of my serving your parish. I thank, especially, the Parish Council, the Fabric Committee and the Finance Committee. Without their efficiency the general administration might be a little chaotic.

As your relatively new incumbent, I am adjusting and being adjusted. I trust you find the running of the Parish reasonably satisfactory. I also hope that the spiritual and sacramental needs of the community are being fulfilled. I would also like to thank you for your financial support. The Parish has no debt and has been instrumental in raising money for a number of charitable works. The only major expenditure in the immediate future is the outstanding balance of £7,758 for the new disabled lift (the total cost being £14,106).

Bishop Hugh Gilbert has intimated that a number of changes are likely to be made in the diocese as far as deployment of priests and parish boundaries are concerned. These changes will not interfere or threaten the autonomy of St. Ninian's. The only change, to date being the establishment of the new independent Parish of St. Columba, Culloden. St. Ninian's will no longer be responsible for the area east of the A9 - the A9 forming the official boundary. Many of our parishioners live in that area and their continuing loyalty and financial support of St. Ninian's would be appreciated. Fr Domenico Zanre will begin his new charge as Parish Priest of Culloden on the 1st of June 2015. It is my intention to give him as much support as I can without weakening the autonomy of St. Ninian's Parish. St. Columba's and St. Mary's will be independent of each other and administered accordingly. I have not been privy to any arrangements made by other clergy and depend solely on the instructions of Bishop Hugh. Nothing has been discussed at deanery level and the only consultation has been the need to change our parish boundary. I understand that Fr Colin Davies is to leave Beaulieu and become Parish Priest of Wick and Thurso. Fr Domenico will be resident at Beaulieu until the new presbytery is built at St. Columba's, Culloden. I have been asked by Fr. Bell to go on a Rota to cover Beaulieu, Cannich, Eskdale, Ullapool and Poolewe and I await confirmation from Bishop Hugh – he may have other ideas

The situation in Raigmore Hospital is even less satisfactory than last year. Sadly, Clara Dungey, the Chaplaincy Secretary, has left and no provision has yet been made either for her replacement or to cover her pastoral work. Clara was the only means of practical communication with the other departments in the hospital and her departure leaves a vacuum. May I emphasize the very serious need for people and clergy to inform me directly as to who might be in hospital. I have no other effective means of finding out. Very few patients have been referred officially to the Catholic Chaplain since Clara's departure. It may need an approach to higher authority if the system continues to be ineffective. The spiritual welfare of all patients - especially Catholic patients - is paramount. A need hardly recognized by today's society. Although the provision of a Catholic Priest involves no cost to the Health Service we

are thrown back on our own devices, despite all the claims about 'wholeness' and 'spiritual needs' of patients and staff.

The parish is indebted to the Dominican Sisters of Cecilia in Elgin for their talks and lectures given over the last year. May I also thank them for their very effective work with our young people. I also appreciate the need for the Sisters to work in conjunction with the catechists in the sacramental preparation of our children. Their welcome expertise must not undervalue the equally professional work undertaken by our own catechists. May I take this opportunity to thank all our catechists most sincerely for the way they attend to the needs of our young people both in preparation for the Sacraments and with the Children's Liturgy. I offer them every assistance. The Sisters have asked to start 'fund raising' for youth events — a request to which I have agreed, subject to reference to our catechists and Parish Council.

It would be good to increase lay involvement with both the everyday working of the Parish and in specific events. This ought to lighten the load of those already committed. The first practical application of this policy has been to recruit additional help to organize and run the Summer Fair. The Open Meeting on Tuesday 19th May was very well attended and much help has been offered. More helpers are needed but the general organization is well in hand. A new team of helpers will supplement the regular faithful in organizing the erection and manning of stalls, the catering and the count of proceeds. It would be good if people were to provide transport for those unable to drive. Please bring along as many children and young helpers as possible. The Summer Fair is our principal social and fund raising event of the year - please come along and bring your friends. Additional offers of help and new ideas to: Gerry Grant, Trish Hallam, Sheila Lamont or Fr. John, please.

Music in the Parish is gradually involving more people- Paul remains on the organ but additional interest is being shown to supplement the Folk Group, The Saturday practices focus on the children and more young musicians are needed to join the group. Many thanks to Archie and David. The Folk Group will be playing at the Summer Fair -additional artistes are welcome to play or sing.

Next year there will be a 'Parish Holiday' in Malta – details will be discussed at the next Parish Council Meeting on Tuesday 2nd of June. The idea is to provide an affordable and flexible holiday for up to 53 people. It will not be under the guise of 'a pilgrimage' and is likely to be a little 'unholy' (Although accommodation will be in a remote priory). I hope non-Catholic spouses might join us.

We also need to remember and support the National Pilgrimage to mark the 400th Anniversary of the Martyrdom of St. John Ogilvie that takes place on Saturday 4th July in Keith. Mass will be at 3.p.m. The main celebrant is Archbishop Leo Cushley and the preacher Bishop Hugh Gilbert. There will be representatives from other denominations, the Civic Authorities and members of the Ogilvie family. This is the National Pilgrimage for 2015 and people will attend from all over Scotland. Please do your best to be there (it has not yet been decided whether to cancel the Vigil Mass in St. Ninian's). There will be a coach leaving from St. Mary's - please make contact if you wish to book a seat.

The Parish List is still very much incomplete and there is no way of contacting many of our parishioners. This is a failing that becomes apparent when urgent contact is necessary. Would those who have not given their details please think of doing so.

The services at Christmas and Easter were well attended but on some Sundays our numbers appear depleted. The annual Head Count in November 2014 was 266. The number of First

Confession: 5. First Holy Communions: 5. Confirmations: Nil (11 in December 2013). There were 8 Baptisms, 1 Marriage and 10 Funerals. Please remember all these children, young people, adults and faithfully departed in your prayers,

There has been very little ecumenical activity among the churches and there appears to be a lack of serious interest. Various parishioners are involved locally with charitable endeavours and I am very grateful for their representing our Church.

Thanks are also due to our Eucharistic Ministers, Altar Servers, cleaners and gardeners (remembering especially Neil Leonard for keeping our grounds so beautifully - ready for the Summer Fair!). And our sincere thanks to all of you for participating in the family of St. Ninian's.

With my prayers and God's Blessing.

### **Chairperson's Report:**

The Parish Pastoral Council met 5 times during the year with an average attendance of 8 from a total of 12 lay members, the same as last year. Sub committees also had meetings to deal with such events as the Summer Fete and the Musical social evening.

Two items carried forward from the previous year were completed; the revision of the Council's constitution and the confidential Parish register of church members.

The Council constitution of 1999 required to be updated because of changes in the Council membership and to bring the AGM arrangements into line with current practice. A draft constitution unanimously approved at the Council meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014 was submitted to the Bishop and received his approval on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 meaning that the new constitution could be adopted in time for this year's AGM. In essence, the updated constitution retains the features of the old one in a fresh format with the lay membership now reduced from 12 to 8 which has been shown to be an adequate number.

The arrival of Fr. John in 2013, new to the Parish and to Inverness, highlighted the need for an accurate, up-to-date confidential Register of church members to help with the response to sick calls etc and for home visits. The onerous and lengthy task of collating the various existing lists with updated information into one Register was undertaken by Douglas Robertson leading to its launch early in the New Year. Douglas's endeavour and that of Trish in this exercise is greatly appreciated by the Council and Fr. John.

Last year the Parish website was vastly improved in presentation and format while also giving Paul Crowe the new facility to edit and amend the content. The website not only carries the weekly newsletter, and items of interests but can also offer much greater space than the notice board and the newsletter for more detailed information on the pastoral activities of parish committees, groups and organisations. To date only the Inverness Justice and Peace group has taken advantage of this facility; after a recent discussion with Paul it was agreed to actively promote this item by contacting all the other groups individually.

With the Finance Committee setting a fundraising target for this year of £4,000.00 the Council relied on the Summer Fete again and a sponsored event with a difference; a hard working sub committee and numerous helpers led by Sheila Lamont and Alison Francis delivered an enjoyable and successful Summer Fete on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> August giving over £2,000.00 to Church funds.

In early September, Paul Crowe agreed to use his annual 3 day bike ride to the Edinburgh Festival as a sponsored event for the parish (delivering letters of pastoral greeting to 8 RC churches on the way); this initiative proved to be highly popular resulting in a handsome total of £1436.00 including Gift Aid.

It is a feature of the Council membership that some are involved in other Parish organisations such as the Fabric and Finance Committees, Catechists, Justice and Peace, Catenians etc; perhaps in the future such individual contact by members could be extended to other parish groups and to the Dominican Sisters from Elgin who have consolidated their important pastoral work with our children and in their excellent talks on diverse church themes that deserve a bigger audience

During the year, the Council responded to points raised by parishioners; the need for more Eucharistic ministers resulted in two further appointments; complaints about noisy chatter in the Church before and immediately after Mass was tackled by reminders on the need for silence at these times; from the pulpit, in the newsletter and the generously donated production of appropriate bookmarks by Tony Lightfoot; the council also bowed to popular demand to have excellent photographs of the Council members by Peter Chisholm displayed on the Notice board.

There were two social occasions; an enjoyable Christmas party for the children and in February a successful Musical Evening showcasing the members of our own church group and which raised over £200.00 for Mary's Meals.

This Council year is ending with planning already underway for the next Summer Fete being held earlier this year before the school holidays. As Fr. John is keen to involve new blood in the Fete organisation and to attract new volunteers and helpers, all parishioners were invited to an "Open Meeting" recently, attracting enough offers of assistance to stage the Fete on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> June. It is to be hoped that parishioners really rally round to support this fundraising event in every way they can and make it an enjoyable, successful occasion once again.

At this meeting we record the retirement of Archie MacCallum and Mario Fernandez and the resignations of Miriam MacDonald and Douglas Robertson; all were enthusiastic and active members of the Council and we are sure they will continue to contribute their talents to the Parish in other ways.

My term as chairman also comes to an end; my thanks go to my fellow Council members for their forbearance and support (especially to Trish our secretary par excellence) to Fr. John for his guidance and to Janet for her immense assistance throughout my 2 years in office.

### **Fabric Committee Report:**

The Fabric Committee was in abeyance during the current year until December 2014 when the new committee was formed and has formally met twice.

### **Major Projects Underway**

**1. Platform Lift for Disabled Access** - We had lengthy discussions about the best approach to repairing or replacing the current lift and finally decided to replace the complete lift except for the rail it is mounted on which will cost £11,755 plus VAT. This option gives us a one year guarantee and was considered the best value for money. The new platform was scheduled for installation/commissioning at the end of April but due to a delay at the manufacturer's plant in Germany the revised date is now the middle of June.

**2. Disabled Car Parking and general parking issues** -The existing disabled parking spaces are not sufficient in number and do not comply with current legislation. It was agreed when the first section of the driveway is re-surfaced in August we would create six disabled spaces with four in front of the church and two adjacent to the boundary wall with Hill Park. In order to minimise congestion we will be remarking the existing spaces. The areas adjacent to the central roundabout at 9.00 and 3.00 o'clock will be hatched in yellow to indicate no parking as this is a current problem. We have also been looking at parking issues on the grass with a view to minimising damage to the grass by embedding more mesh into the grass which will be used to create a central drive way along with more drainage where required.

**General Issues**-We are now in the process of carrying out the Quinquennial Inspection which is due in the current year, covering both the church and the presbytery. Should any issues arise from this report that need attention they will need to be discussed by the committee and categorised as follows:-

1. Requires immediate attention.
2. Requires attention within one year
3. Routine maintenance.

The committee are always happy for parishioners to approach them with any concerns they may have.

### **Finance Committee Report:**

Janet Webb, parish treasurer, noted that the Finance Committee (comprising Fr John, Paul Crowe as chairman, Archie MacCallum and herself) had met four times during the year and once since. Brief reports of the meetings continued to appear in the parish newsletter.

Turning to the statement of parish receipts and payments for the year to 31 March 2015 (copy attached), she highlighted two key points: first, the closing balance at 31 March had risen by over £12,000 in the year to £43,711, and at 5 May (the latest figure available) stood at £47,000 – a very commendable result; second, the ‘core income’ of the parish (offertory, standing orders and tax rebate) had held up remarkably well and at £55,872 was only £500 down from the previous year, though more recently the weekly collections had tended to drop. The parish Gift Aid tax rebate (£8,964) would have been higher had the £1,250 due under the new Small Donations Gift Aid Scheme been received during the year. Under this scheme, provided a parish’s tax rebate under the main scheme was £5,000, it was possible to claim a further rebate on up to £5,000 of loose plate (excluding cheques and notes over £20). However, to secure this it must be possible for the parish to prove the audit trail back from the claim to the parish ledgers. Some parishes had not been able to do this: hence the delay to the diocesan claim. She understood St Ninian’s claim was currently with HMRC. Under a new concession it would be possible from 2016 to claim up to £2,000 under this scheme, provided the rebate on the main scheme was £8,000 – which served to underline the importance of the main scheme, and of continuing to recruit new members for that. On other receipt items, fund raising, gifts and bequests during the year totalled £9,948, which showed again the generosity of parishioners. Special collections at £7,526 included £1,600 for SCIAF, £1,400 for the Missions and the excellent sum of £2,377 for the Bishop’s special appeal for the persecuted Iraqi Christians. On payments, the main components of church running expenses (£5,854) were oil and electricity (£4,658) and altar expenses (£1,130). House expenses (£3,200) comprised heating and lighting and council tax. Maintenance and repairs under £1,500 (£3,462) contained nothing untoward, the largest item being £600 for a repair to the roof. Approved repairs and projects (£7,967) comprised the repair to the platform lift the previous autumn (£1,620) and a down payment on the replacement carriage (£6,347) in March. Office expenses (£4,132) covered telephone, computing and copying costs, stationery, Mass times adverts and catechetical items. Diocesan levies (£25,572) comprised (a) Central costs

(£15,438), major components being the cost of seminarians, of administration, and of support of the bishop and of sick and retired priests, and (b) Clergy costs (£10,134).

On prospects for the year ahead, the balance in hand was good (£47,000 at 5 May). At the time the budget was prepared at the end of March, the parish's incomings and outgoings for the year ahead were expected to be more or less equal, provided the fund-raising target of £4,000 was achieved. However, it now seemed that the projects being progressed by the Fabric Committee were likely to cost more in total than had been allowed at the time of the budget. Nevertheless, the parish had the necessary resources. Finally, the Finance Committee remained very grateful that parishioners continued to support the parish so generously.

### **Catechist's Report:**

In the absence of Alison Francis, the Catechist's report was read by Marlene Atkinson. As I reported last year regrettably our numbers continue to decline as St Mary's and St Columba's now offer classes for sacramental preparation. Previously we held classes for all the children in the Inverness area who do not attend the catholic primary school, encouraging participation from P1 through to P7, enabling faith development through covering the syllabus recommended in 'This is Our Faith' and used in the catholic schools.

We currently have 18 children registered that attend classes, most meeting on a Monday between 4pm -5pm, and some meeting between 5pm – 6pm. We try our best to be as flexible as possible if a parent for whatever reason cannot bring their child to classes on a Monday. This year we have an extra class after Mass on Sunday and one child is visited at home.

We have 3 children preparing for Reconciliation (the date to be arranged) and 8 children are preparing to make their First Holy Communion on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June.

In October last year we were sorry to say goodbye to Catherine McDougall from the catechism team. Catherine has now retired from the weekly classes, but has very kindly offered to step in, when required, for which we are very grateful. We had a small party for Catherine at the end of term, where the children, parents and catechists showed their appreciation for all her hard work and dedication.

Classes will finish on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June with our usual end of term party and will resume again in September after the children return to school. Marlene added the following comments:

There are 16 candidates for Confirmation this year – 14 on a Monday and 2 candidates who couldn't join the Monday class whom I taught at home.

If it weren't for Alison there probably wouldn't be any Catechism classes. She does a lot of work behind the scenes and helps to make the classes run smoothly.

### **Reports from any other Parish organisations:**

#### **Justice and Peace group:**

The Justice and Peace group met throughout the year at the Olive Grove Cafe in the Kingsmills area of town. Although most members are from St Ninian's Church we consider it an opportunity for our churches to work together.

Two of our meetings last year coincided with events at Crown Church regarding Scotland's Independence Referendum. We decided to join with other parishes in the town to listen and consider issues in a Christian context in the lead up to the vote. Both events were video linked to speakers in Edinburgh. In the post-referendum event we were able to submit feedback to the Smith Commission to be considered in the new devolved powers for Scotland.

One meeting was devoted to learning more about the elections that were taking place in Nigeria.

Dominic from St Mary's shared with us his experiences and insights about the situation in Nigeria where there was an opportunity to ask questions about this large and important African nation.

One evening was devoted to learning more about the impact that climate change is having on our planet and its poorest and most vulnerable people. We had the opportunity to share ideas about reducing our carbon footprints and doing our part to reduce environmental damage.

Another meeting coincided with Fr Bell's evening talk on Julian of Norwich at St Columba's. We decided to join the other parishes for this evening of information and prayer.

Between all of those informative meetings some of our evenings had a large part devoted to praying for peace in our communities and around the world. In December we had a candlelight service praying for peace in our families and in our world. Recently we devoted one evening to praying for the people of Nepal after the earthquakes, and migrants who are fleeing dangerous circumstances in the hope of living better lives.

In the past couple of years, members have expressed an interest in becoming more active in the area of Justice and Peace in our local community. Last June we became aware of an initiative to begin cooking meals for the homeless in Inverness. Several members have become involved in Inverness Foodstuff which is a joint venture between churches, Highland Council and NHS. There are approximately 10 parishioners from St Ninian's now regularly volunteering to either cook or serve meals each month. One parishioner secured a grant from his workplace to help get this programme off the ground.

The number of people who attend our monthly meetings varies, generally about 8 people, more if there is a special speaker. Meetings are open to all and we warmly welcome anyone who would like to join us.

#### **Election of Officer bearers and lay members:**

Chair – Sheila Lamont – proposed by Trish Hallam; seconded by Jill Kent – duly appointed

Secretary: - Trish Hallam – proposed by Gerry Grant; seconded by Tony Lightfoot – duly appointed.

Lay Members: Gerry Grant; Tony Lightfoot; Sheila Lamont; Ali MacDonald; Dennis Tracey; Alison Francis; Jill Kent and Trish Hallam

#### **AOCB**

There being no further business, Fr. John closed the meeting with everyone saying the Lord's Prayer.